

THE EXECUTIVE DECISION PROCESS

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THE EXECUTIVE DECISION PROCESS

Background

1. Decisions in NOAA will be made at the lowest practical level. The process outlined below provides a framework in which issues can be resolved at the lowest possible level and, as necessary, elevated to a higher level in an orderly manner.

Organization

2. NOAA's Executive Decision Process (EDP) uses a tiered structure wherein significant NOAA issues are identified, discussed, decided or framed for decision at the next higher level. It consists of: A) NOAA Executive Council; B) NOAA Executive Panel; C) Councils; and D) Committees. The flow of decisions through the process is depicted in Attachment 1. Information on each follows:

A. NOAA Executive Council (NEC). The NEC provides information and counsel to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere (U/S) for decisions on key NOAA issues (e.g., policy, resources requirement approval, future directions) and to provide a clear and unambiguous record of U/S decisions and directions.

(1) NEC principals include: U/S (chair), Assistant Secretary, Deputy Under Secretary (DUS), Deputy Assistant Secretaries, General Counsel (GC), all Assistant Administrators (AA) and Director, NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations (NMAO).

(2) NEC advisors include : NOAA Chief of Staff; Director, Public, Constituent, and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPCIA); Director, Legislative Affairs (LA); Chief Information Officer (CIO); Director, Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E); Chief Administrative Officer (CAO); Chief Financial Officer (CFO); Director, Workforce Management Office (WMO); Director, Acquisition and Grants Office (AGO); Director, Office of Education and Sustainable Development (ESD) and Executive Director/ Deputy Under Secretary.

(3) Operating procedures and a process flowchart for the NEC are included in Attachments 2 and 3.

B. NOAA Executive Panel (NEP). The NEP provides information and advice to the Deputy Under Secretary for issues related to NOAA's day-to-day operations and management, and coordinates and oversees the planning, programming and budgeting process. It serves as the final forum ensuring that issues, programs and briefings are condensed into understandable terms and recommendations for decisions before presentation to the NEC.

(1) NEP principals include: DUS, all Deputy AA's (including PPI Deputy),

Deputy Director NMAO, CIO, CFO, CAO, and Directors WMO, PA&E, and AGO.

(2) NEP advisors include: Executive Director/DUS, and Deputy Directors of ESD, GC, IA, LA, OPCIA, and Military Affairs.

(3) Depending on topic, Council Chairs or subject matter experts may attend the applicable portion of the meeting. DCO approval is required.

(4) Operating procedures and a process flowchart for the NEP are included in Attachments 2 and 3.

C. Councils and Committees. NOAA's councils and committees are the focal point for considering NOAA-wide issues (e.g., planning, resource requirements, and policy) in various functional areas. They serve as a forum for reviewing and as appropriate deciding issues, formulating decision briefings, and condensing complex issues and programs into understandable terms and recommendations for decision before presentations to the NEC and NEP.

(1) The terms of reference and responsibilities of each council and committee are included in Attachment 7.

(2) Councils and committees will convene as designated by the chairperson. Each council/committee chair will designate permanent staff to coordinate, archive and maintain records. The staff will include an executive secretariat that will draft and distribute minutes and decision memoranda. Copies of council/committee minutes and decision memoranda will be provided to the DCO.

Responsibilities

3. The DUS is responsible for the operation and administration of the NOAA Executive Decision Process.

A. The Decision Coordination Office (DCO) will serve as Executive Secretary to the NEC and NEP. The DCO will: establish meeting agendas, procedures and attendance; distribute schedule information; prepare, distribute and maintain NEC/NEP proceedings (minutes and decision memoranda -- NOAA Decision Memorandum); maintain and archive a list of outstanding NEP/NEC actions items; and in cooperation with Executive Secretariat, track actions to ensure completion.

B. Line or staff offices assigned actions in a NOAA Decision Memorandum will forward responses to the DCO. Responses longer than a page should be

forwarded under cover of a one-page summary paper. Tasked line/staff offices are responsible for incorporating NEC/NEP decisions into appropriate NOAA policy documents.

Attendance

4. Candid discussion and the provision of quality advice are facilitated by small meetings. Attendance will be controlled.

A. Principals are expected to attend meetings. If unable to attend, a principal may send a senior executive (empowered to speak for the principal) to the meeting. Both the DUS and DCO shall be notified of the substitution.

B. Advisors are not required to attend each NEC/NEP session; however, they are expected to attend sessions dealing with topics in their functional area. Advisors may not send substitutes unless lack of representation in their functional area would degrade the effectiveness of the discussion. Prior approval of the DCO is required.

C. Depending on the topic, Council chairs or subject matter experts may attend that portion of the meeting when the subject is discussed. Approval must be granted by the DCO.

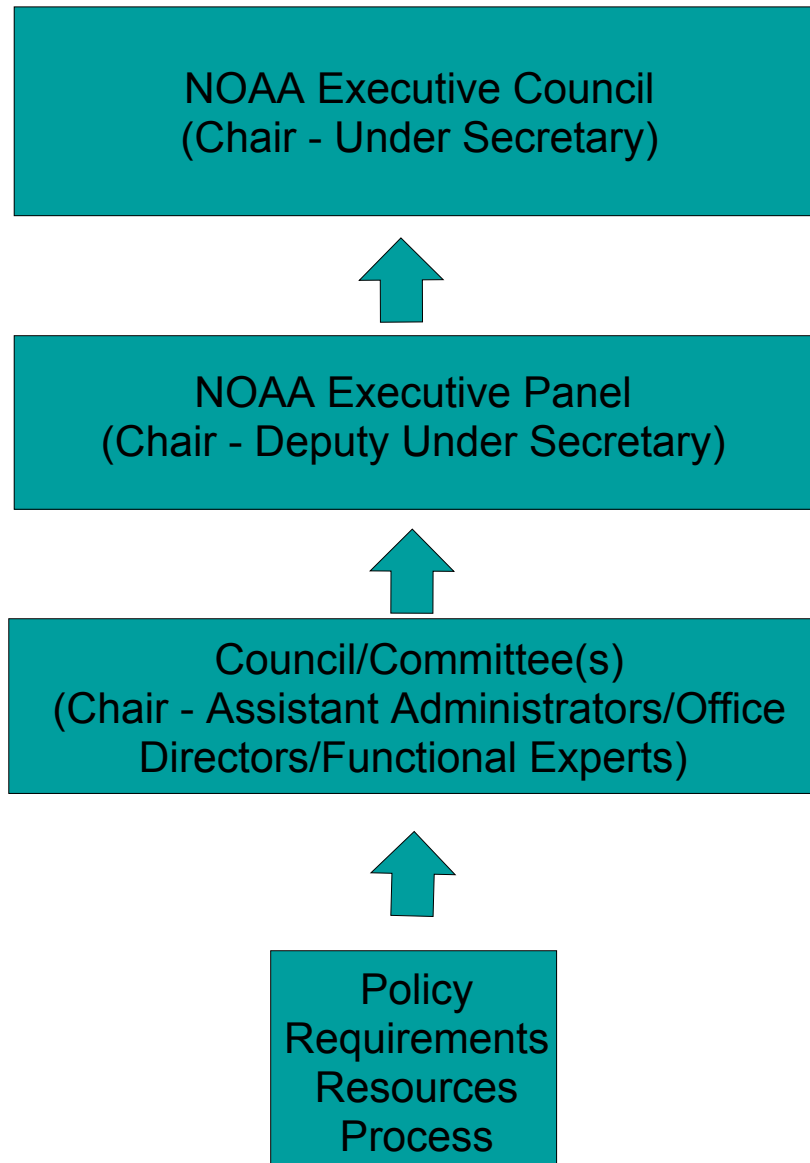
Submission of Topics

5. NEC/NEP principals, advisors and council chairs may suggest issues for NEC/NEP deliberation by sending the DCO a memorandum stating proposed topic, rationale for presentation, expected issues and desired presentation date. The memorandum should be submitted well in advance of desired date.

Attachments:

1. Decision Flow
2. Procedures For The NEC/NEP
3. NEC/NEP Process Flowchart
4. Tips For A Successful Briefing
5. Issue Assessment
6. Paper-only NEC/NEP Decision Making Process
7. NOAA Councils and Committees - under revision
8. NEC/NEP Standard Presentation Template

Decision Flow



PROCEDURES FOR THE NEC/NEP

1. Administrative

A. NEC/NEP e-mail list is limited to NEC/NEP business.

B. The Decision Coordination Office (DCO) will, within two work days of a meeting, prepare, and distribute meeting minutes (including brief summary, decisions and action items). The minutes will be coordinated with the NOAA Chief of Staff and Executive Director to the Deputy Under Secretary. Members will have two working days for coordination.

C. A NOAA Decision Memorandum (NDM) will serve to document and provide a clear record of decisions and direction. Within six work days of a NEC/NEP meeting, the DCO will prepare and forward to the Under Secretary (U/S) or Deputy Under Secretary (DUS), as appropriate, for signature a NDM. Copies will be provided to NEC/NEP members and archived by the DCO.

2. Procedures

A. Principals and advisors are expected to come to meetings with a grasp of the issues and prepared to discuss alternatives, implications of proposed actions and what is best for NOAA. Principals and advisors are not required to personally present NEC/NEP briefings. They may select a subject matter or functional expert to give the presentation.

B. Principals should attend meetings.

C. All presentations to the NEC must be reviewed by the NEP. If the NEP believes the presentation provides insufficient factual information, requires clearer focus or fails to adequately identify alternatives, or lacks clear identification of the problem, guidance will be provided for necessary improvement.

D. Decision briefings impacting financial resources (budget year or out year) must be reviewed by the CFO Council before presentation to the NEC/NEP.

E. Presenters will provide "Read Ahead" material (which include presentations, issue assessments (see Attachment 5), and any related materials) electronically to DCO for each agenda item 120 hours (5 days) prior to the meeting. Changes to presentation material are not permitted without the approval of the NEC/NEP chair.

G. Topics that pertain to more than one line or staff office must be coordinated with relevant offices in advance.

H. Presentations should proceed without interruption except when clarification is needed.

I. Normally, one hour will be allocated to each topic. To allow adequate time for discussion, briefings should not exceed 30 minutes.

J. Presentation Requirements

(1) Presenters must provide equipment/support requirements to the DCO two work days before meeting.

(2) Presenters must stay within time allocation for briefing.

(3) Presenters are responsible for “slide turning” or equipment operation.

(4) Accurate and traceable cost, schedule and performance information should be included.

(5) Presentations must be well thought out, with reasonable and viable options and accurate and verifiable information, and provide a solid basis for decisions. They must strike a balance between brevity and completeness. Briefing tips are included in Attachment 4.

(6) Presentations should be prepared as follows:

(a) In the standard NOAA briefing format (Attachment 8). Tailor material to briefing purpose (i.e., decision or information).

(b) Pages oriented length-wise (landscape orientation).

©) Each page numbered consecutively.

(7) If revisions are required to “Read Ahead” packages, hard copies must be provided at the meeting and changes must be indicated by highlighting, margin notation or other means.

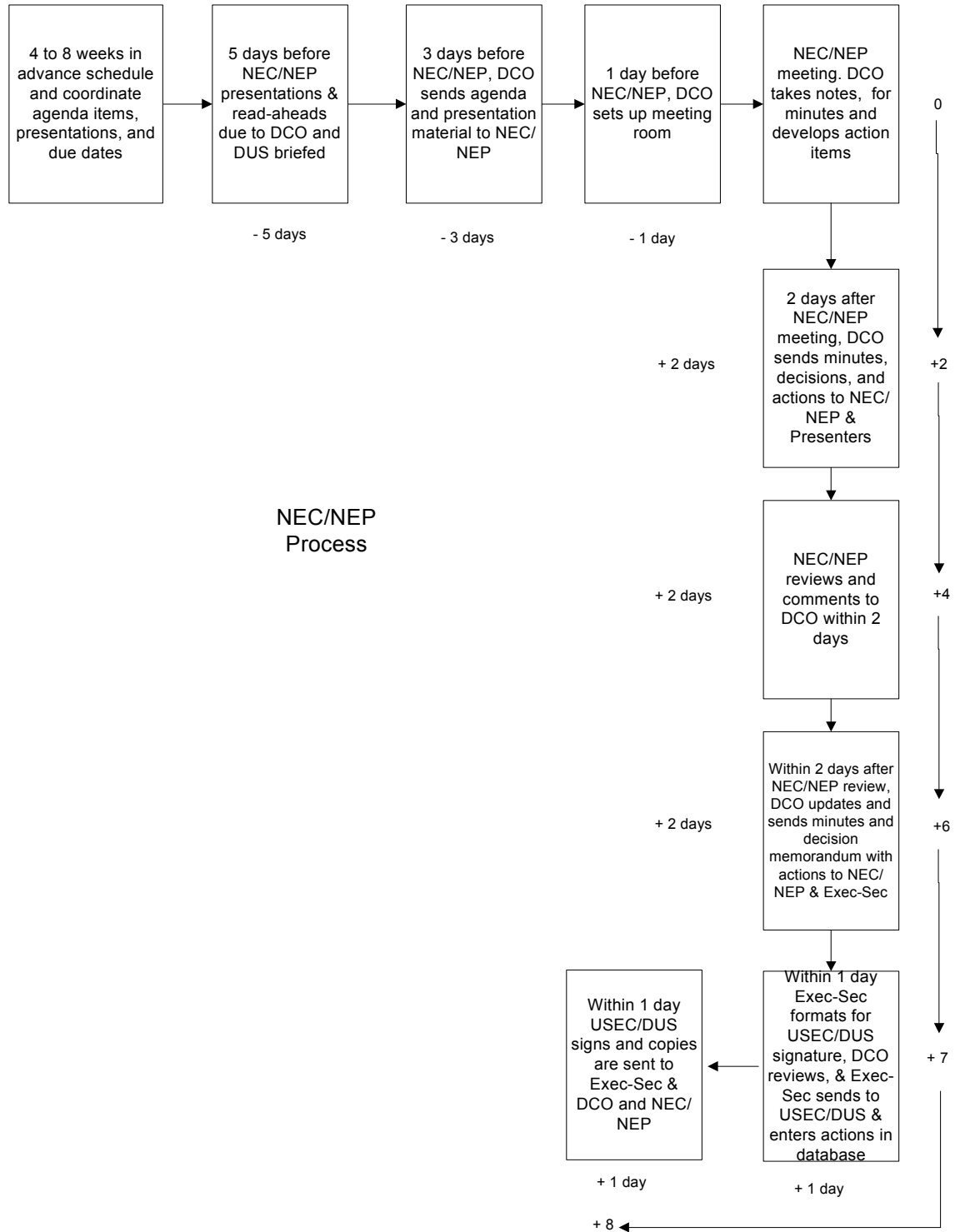
(8) Identify any Five Year Plan (FYP) funding impacts, by fiscal year, noting whether funding is shown in constant or then year dollars. Be consistent throughout brief.

K. When time is critical for a decision and a NEC or NEP meeting is not possible, a Paper-Only NEC/NEP Decision may be used. Procedures for a Paper-Only NEC/NEP Decision can be found in Attachment 6.

3. Scheduling

A. The DCO will be responsible for scheduling meetings. Both the NEC and NEP will meet bi-weekly (on off weeks) or at call of the chair.

NEC/NEP PROCESS FLOWCHART



TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL BRIEFING

- A. Briefings can be of two main categories: informational and decisional. The briefing should make clear at the beginning the category and, if a decision is required, provide a clear statement of the desired decision, based on a comprehensive assessment of well defined alternatives.
- B. Strike a balance between brevity and completeness. Avoid the tendency to include “tutorial” background material. For complex issues, providing a pre-brief tutorial package to attendees several days in advance of the meeting (no more than five slides or 3 narrative pages) will be helpful.
- C. Stay within allocated time.
- D. A chart clearly comparing each of the alternatives and associated costs will facilitate decision making.
- E. Identify what the recommended decision provides NOAA for the requested resources (i.e., performance measure improvement, capability or capacity).
- F. Cost, schedule and performance information must be accurate, credible, verifiable and consistent throughout briefing. Errors undermine credibility.
- G. Be hard-hitting, factual and concise.
- H. Briefing slides should stand on their own without need for lengthy explanatory text.
- I. Number briefing slides.

ISSUE ASSESSMENT*

TITLE

DATE and TIME OF PRESENTATION

ISSUE

DESIRED RESULT – include what NOAA gains by decision

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS – pros and cons

DISSENTING VIEWS – who, what and why

DOC, OMB and CONGRESSIONAL VIEWS

*Concise assessment of topic - maximum of 2 pages

Paper-Only NEC/NEP Decision-Making Process

What is the paper-only NEC/NEP decision-making process?

- It is a method for considering an issue and arriving at a decision without convening a NEC or NEP meeting. The NEP will, as appropriate, make a decision or refer the matter to the NEC.

When is it appropriate to use the paper-only decision-making process?

- When a decision time is critical. Rules applying to material being discussed at a NEC or NEP meeting also apply to paper-only NEC/NEPs, e.g., the presentation format shall follow the template, all presentations for the NEC shall first be reviewed by the NEP, budget requests shall first be reviewed by the CFO Council, etc.

How does a paper-only NEC/NEP briefing get distributed to the NEC or NEP?

- Material shall be coordinated with and sent to DCO <dco@noaa.gov>. DCO will distribute to NEC or NEP members.
- Briefings shall follow standard presentation format; PowerPoint notes pages explaining the presentation will ease consideration by NEC or NEP members.

How long do reviewers have to review a paper-only NEC/NEP briefing?

- The standard review period is 2 business days. As necessary, the review period will be shortened. Lack of comments or input by the prescribed due date is considered to be concurrence with the proposal.

How are paper-only NEC/NEP responses handled?

- NEC/NEP members fill out a concurrence form (attached) and send responses, including specific comments, to DCO.

DATE

Sample: Paper-Only NEC/NEP Decision Template

TO: NOAA Executive Council or NOAA Executive Panel
FROM: Decision Coordination Office
SUBJECT: Paper-only NEC/NEP Decision
REFERENCE: (subject of NEC/NEP briefing)

Please review the attached briefing and respond to (dco@noaa.gov) within 2 business days.

Please indicate your choice as follows:

1. Concur.
2. Concur, with changes. (attached)
3. For Paper-only NEC meetings:
Do not concur. The material is not satisfactory or sufficient to make a decision.

For Paper-only NEPs meetings:
Do not concur. The material is not satisfactory to forward to the NEC or sufficient to make a decision (rationale attached).

Additional comments:

NOAA Councils And Committees

Terms of Reference

NOTE: Terms of Reference for NOAA Councils and Committees are being revised and are not included in this document.